



J. H. Hamlin.

THE LABOURER'S LIBRARY.—No. I.

THE RIGHT OF THE POOR

TO THE SUFFRAGE OF

THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER:

OR

THE HONESTY AND JUSTICE

OF THE PRINCIPLE OF

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE,

ESTABLISHED AND MAINTAINED

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM COBBETT, M. P.

FOR OLDHAM.

Together with Mr. COBBETT's Address to the Farmers and Tradesmen of England, on their Treatment of the Poor.

REPRINTED FROM COBBETT'S "TWO PENNY TRASH."

LEEDS:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. HOBSON, MARKET STREET; SOLD BY A. HEYWOOD, OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER; J. CLEAVE, SHOE LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON; AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS;

1841.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]

TO THE WORKING PEOPLE.

MY FRIENDS,

YOU, who do all the bodily labour, who make to come all the food, all the drink, all the clothing, all the houses, all the horses and carriages ; you, without whose help those who do not work would be starved to death, or would die with cold ; you, who are at once the only source of the country's wealth, and the only means of its security ; to you I now address myself on the subject of the Suffrage, or right to vote.

No right, not even that of enjoying life and limb, is clearer than the right of *every man* of sane mind, and unstained by indelible crime, to have a voice in the choosing of those who are to make the laws affecting his liberty and life. Let me, however, upon this point, throw down the gauntlet to our foes ; let me *prove the right* ; and, when I have done that, let those who have the audacity to deny the right to the working people, reply to me, if they can or dare. This right is the great and important matter ; and, therefore, my friends, lend me your patient attention, while I go to the very *foundation* of it, and show that it is built upon the rock of reason and justice ; that it is founded in the law of nature itself ; that it *belongs* to man as completely as does his right to eat or to breathe. Attend patiently, my friends, while I *prove* this ; and, when I have done that, let us, if we be able, express suitable scorn at those who are bawling for "*confidence*" in men, who deny this right, and punish those who contend for its full recognition.

Time was when all the inhabitants of this island laid claim to all things in it, without the words *owner* or *property* being known. God had given to *all* the people all the land and all the trees, and everything else, just as he has given the burrows and the grass to the rabbits, and the bushes and the berries to the birds ; and each man had the good things of this world in a greater or less degree in proportion to his skill, his strength, and his valour. This is what is called living under the LAW OF NATURE ; that is to say, the law of self-preservation and self-enjoyment, without any restraint imposed by a regard for the good of our neighbours.

In process of time, no matter from what cause, men made amongst themselves a compact, or an agreement, to divide the land and its products in such a manner that each should have a share to his own exclusive use, and that each man should be protected in the exclusive enjoyment of his share by the *united power of the rest* ; and, in order to ensure the due and certain application of this united power, the whole of the people agreed to be bound by regulations, called LAWS. Thus arose civil society ; thus arose *property* ; thus arose the words *mine* and *thine*. One man became possessed of more good things than another, because he was more industrious, more skilful, or more frugal ; so, that LABOUR, of one sort or another, was the FOUNDATION of all property.

In what manner civil societies proceeded in providing for the making of laws and for the enforcing of them ; the various ways in which they took measures to protect the weak against the strong ; how they have gone to work to secure wealth against the attacks of poverty ; these are subjects that it would require volumes to detail : but these truths are written on the heart of man ; namely, that all men are, by nature, *equal* ; that civil society can never have arisen from any motive other than that of the *benefit of the whole* ; that, whenever civil society makes the greater part of the people *worse off* than they were under the Law of Nature, the civil compact is, in conscience, dissolved, and all the rights of nature return ; that, in civil society, the *rights and the duties go hand in hand*, and that when the former are taken away, the latter cease to exist.

Now, then, in order to act well our part, as citizens, or members of the community, we ought clearly to understand *what our rights are* ; for on our enjoyment of these depends our duty, rights going before duties, as value received goes before payment. I know well, that just the contrary of this is taught by those who fatten on our toil ; for they tell us, that our *first duty* is to *obey the laws* ; and it is not many years ago that HORSLEY, Bishop of Rochester, told us, that the *people* had *nothing* to do with the laws but to *obey* them. The truth is, however, that the citizen's *first duty* is to maintain his rights, as it is the purchaser's first duty to receive the thing for which he has contracted.

Our rights in society are numerous ; the right of enjoying life and property ; the right of exerting our physical and mental powers in an innocent manner ; but the great right of all, and without which there is, in fact, *no right*, is, the right of *taking a part in the making of the laws by which we are governed*. This right is founded in that law of nature spoken of above ; it springs out of the very principle of civil society ; for what *compact*, what *agreement*, what *common assent*, can possibly be imagined by which men would give up all the rights of nature, all the free enjoyment of their bodies and their minds, in order to subject themselves to rules and laws, *in the making of which they should have nothing to say*, and which should be enforced upon them *without their assent* ? The great right, therefore, of *every man*, the right of rights, is the right of having a share in the making of the laws, to which the good of the whole makes it his duty to submit.

With regard to the means of enabling every man to enjoy this share, they have been different, in different countries, and in the same countries at different times. Generally it has been, and in great communities it must be, by the choosing of a few to speak and act *in behalf of the many* ; and, as there will hardly ever be *perfect unanimity* among men assembled for any purpose whatever, where fact and argument are to decide the question, the decision is left to the *majority*, the compact being that the decision of the majority shall be that of the whole. *Minors* are excluded from this right, because the law considers them as infants, because it makes the parent answerable for civil damages committed by them, and because of their legal incapacity to make any compact. *Women* are excluded, because husbands are answerable in law for their wives as to their civil damages, and because the very nature of their sex makes the exercise of this right incompable

with the harmony and happiness of society. Men stained with *indelible crimes* are excluded, because they have forfeited their right by violating the laws to which their assent has been given. *Insane persons* are excluded, because they are dead in the eye of the law, because the law demands no duty at their hands, because they cannot violate the law, because the law cannot affect them; and, therefore, they ought to have no hand in making it.

But, with these exceptions, where is the ground whereon to maintain that *any man* ought to be deprived of this right, which he derives directly from the law of nature, and which springs, as I said before, out of the same source with civil society itself? Am I told, that *property* ought to confer this right? Property sprang from *labour*, and not labour from property; so that if there were to be a distinction here, it ought to give the preference to labour. All men are equal by nature; nobody denies that they all ought to be *equal in the eye of the law*: but how are they to be thus equal, if the law begins by suffering *some* to enjoy this right and refusing the enjoyment to *others*? It is the duty of every man to defend his country against an enemy, a duty imposed by the law of nature, as well as by that of civil society; and without the recognition of this duty, there could exist no independent nation and no civil society. Yet, how are you to maintain that that this is the duty of *every man*, if you deny to *some* men the enjoyment of a share in making the laws? Upon what principle are you to contend for *equality* here, while you deny its existence as to the right of sharing in the making of the laws? The poor man has a body and a soul as well as the rich man; like the latter, he has parents, wife and children; a bullet or a sword is as deadly to him as to the rich man; there are hearts to ache and tears to flow for him as well as for the squire or the lord or the loanmonger: yet, notwithstanding this equality, he is to risk all, and, if he escape, he is still to be denied an equality of rights! If, in such a state of things, the artisan or labourer, when called out to fight in defence of his country, were to answer: "Why should I risk my life? I have no possession but my *labour*; no enemy will take that from me; you, the rich, possess all the land and all its products; you make what laws you please without my participation or assent; you punish me at your pleasure; you say that my want of property excludes me from the right of having a share in the making of the laws; you say that the property that I have in my labour is *nothing worth*; on what ground, then, do you call upon me to risk my life?" If, in such a case, such questions were put, the answer is very difficult to be imagined.

In cases of *civil commotion* the matter comes still more home to us. On what ground is the rich man to call the artisan from his shop or the labourer from the field to join the sheriff's posse, or militia, if he refuse to the labourer and artisan the right of sharing in the making of the laws? Why are they to risk their lives here? To *uphold the laws*, and to protect *property*? What! *laws*, in the making of, or assenting to, which, they have been allowed to have no share? *Property*, of which they are said to possess none? What! compel men to come forth and risk their lives for the *protection of property*; and then, in the same breath, tell them, that they are not allowed to share

in the making of the laws, because, and ONLY BECAUSE, *they have no property!* Not because they have committed any crime; not because they are idle or profligate; not because they are vicious in any way; but solely because they have *no property*; and yet at the same time compel them to come forth and *risk their lives* for the *protection of property!*

But, the PAUPERS? Ought *they* to share in the making of the laws? And why not? What is a *pauper*; what is one of the men to whom this degrading appellation is applied? A *very poor* man; a man who is, from some cause or other, unable to supply himself with food and raiment without aid from the parish-rates. And is that circumstance alone to deprive him of his right, a right of which he stands more in need than any other man? Perhaps he has, for many years of his life, contributed directly to those rates, and ten thousand to one he has, by his labour, contributed to them indirectly. The aid which, under such circumstances, he receives, is *his right*; he receives it not as an alms: he is no mendicant; he begs not; he comes to receive that which *the law of the country awards him* IN LIEU of the *larger portion* assigned him by the law of nature.

Is it, then, consistent with justice, with humanity, with reason, to deprive a man of the most precious of his political rights, because, and *only because*, he has been, in a pecuniary way, *singularly unfortunate*? The Scripture says, "Despise not the poor, *because he is poor*;" that is to say, despise him not *on account of his poverty*. Why then deprive him of his right; why put him out of the pale of the law on account of his poverty? There are *some* men, to be sure, who are reduced to poverty by their vices, by idleness, by gaming, by drinking, by squandering; but the far greater part by bodily ailments, by misfortunes, to the effects of which all men may, without any fault, and even without any folly, be exposed: and is there a man on earth so cruelly unjust as to wish to add to the sufferings of such persons by stripping them of their political rights? How many thousand of industrious and virtuous men have, within these few years, been brought down from a state of competence to that of pauperism! And is it just to strip such men of their rights, merely because they are thus brought down? When I was at Ely, there were, in that neighbourhood, *three paupers* cracking stones on the roads, who had all three been, not only rate-payers, but *overseers of the poor*, within seven years of the day when I was there. Is there any man so barbarous as to say, that these men ought, merely on account of their misfortunes, to be deprived of their political rights? Their right to receive relief is as perfect as any right of property; and would you merely because they claim *this right*, strip them of another right? To say no more of the injustice and the cruelty, is there reason, is there common sense, in this? What! if a farmer or tradesman be, by flood or by fire, so totally ruined as to be compelled, surrounded by his family, to resort to the parish-book, would you break the last heart-string of such a man by making him feel the degrading loss of his political rights?

Here, *here is the point*, on which we are to take our stand. There are always men enough to plead the cause of the rich; enough and enough to echo the woes of the fallen great; but, be it our part to

show compassion for, and maintain the rights of, those who labour. Poverty is not a *crime*; and, though it sometimes arises from faults, it is not, even in that case, to be visited with punishment beyond that which it brings with itself. Remember, that poverty is decreed by the very nature of man. The Scripture says that "the poor shall never cease from out of the land"; that is to say, that there shall always be some very poor people. This is inevitable from the very nature of things. It is necessary to the existence of mankind, that a very large portion of every people should live by manual labour; and, as such labour is *pain*, more or less, and as no living creature likes pain, it must be that the far greater part of labouring people will endure only just as much of this pain as is absolutely necessary to the supply of their daily wants. Experience says that this has always been, and reason and nature tells us that this must always be. Therefore, when ailments, when losses, when untoward circumstances of any sort, stop or diminish the daily supply, *want comes*; and every just government will provide, from the general stock, the means to satisfy this want.

Nor is the deepest poverty without its *useful effects* in society. To the practice of the virtues of abstinence, sobriety, care, frugality, industry, and even honesty and amiable manners and acquirement of talent, the two great motives are, to get upwards in riches or fame, and to *avoid going downwards to poverty*, the last of which is the most powerful of the two. It is, therefore, not with contempt, but with compassion that we should look on those whose state is one of the decrees of nature, from whose sad example we profit, and to whom, in return, we ought to make compensation by every indulgent and kind act in our power, and particularly by a defence of their rights. To those who labour, we, who labour not with our hands, owe all that we eat, drink, and wear; all that shades us by day and that shelters us by night; all the means of enjoying health and pleasure; and, therefore, if we possess talent for the task, we are ungrateful or cowardly, or both, if we omit any effort within our power to prevent them from being *slaves*; and, disguise the matter how we may, a *slave*, a *real slave*, every man is, who has no share in making the laws which he is compelled to obey.

What is a slave? For, let us not be amused by a *name*; but look well into the matter. A slave is, in the first place, a man who has *no property*; and property means something that he *has*, and that nobody can take from him without his leave or consent. Whatever man, no matter what he may call himself or any-body else may call him, can have his money or his goods taken from him *by force*, by virtue of an order, or ordinance, or law, which he has had no hand in making, and to which he has not given his assent, has *no property*, and is merely a depository of the goods of his master. A slave has *no property in his labour*; and any man who is compelled to give up the fruit of his labour to another, at the arbitrary will of that other, has no property in his labour, and is, therefore, a slave, whether the fruit of his labour be taken from him directly or indirectly. If it be said that he gives up this fruit of his labour by his own will, and that it is not *forced from him*; I answer, to be sure he *may* avoid eating and drinking and may go naked; but then he must die; and on this condition, and this con-

dition only, can he refuse to give up the fruit of his labour. "Die, wretch, or surrender as much of your income, or the fruit of your labour, as your masters choose to take." This is, in fact, the language of the rulers to every man who is refused to have a share in the making of the laws to which he is *forced* to submit.

But, some one may say, slaves are *private property*, and may be *bought and sold*, out and out, like cattle. And, what is it to the slave, whether he be the property of *one* or of *many*; or, what matters it to him, whether he pass from master to master by a sale for an indefinite term, or be let to hire by the year, month, or week? It is, in no case, the flesh and blood and bones that are sold, but the *labour*; and, if you actually sell the labour of man, is not that man a *slave*, though you sell it for only a short time at once? And, as to the principle so ostentatiously displayed in the case of the *black slave-trade*, that "*man ought not to have a property in man*," it is even an advantage to the slave to be private property, because the owner has then a clear and powerful *interest* in the preservation of his life, health, and strength, and will, therefore, furnish him amply with the food and raiment necessary for this end. Every one knows that public property is never so well taken care of as private property; and this, too, on the maxim, that "that which is everybody's business is nobody's business." Every one knows that a rented farm is not so well kept in heart, as a farm in the hands of the owner. And, as to *punishment* and *restraints*, what difference is there, whether these be inflicted and imposed by a private owner, or his overseer, or by the agent or overseers of a body of proprietors? In short, if you can cause a man to be imprisoned or whipped if he do not work enough to please you; if you can sell him by auction for a time limited; if you can forcibly separate him from his wife to prevent their having children; if you can shut him up in his dwelling place when you please, and for as long a time as you please; if you can force him to draw a cart or a waggon like a beast of draught; if you can, when the humour seizes you, and at the suggestion of your mere fears, or whim, cause him to be shut up in a dungeon during your pleasure: if you can, at your pleasure, do these things to him, is it not to be insolently hypocritical to affect to call him a *free man*? But, after all, these may all be wanting, and yet the man be a slave, if he be allowed to have no property; and, as I have shown, no property he can have, not even in that *labour* which is not only property, but the *basis* of all other property, unless he have a *share in making the laws* to which he is compelled to submit.

It is said, that he may have this share *virtually*, though not in form and *name*; for that his *employers* may have such share, and they will, as a matter of course, *act for him*. This doctrine, pushed home, would make the *chief* of the nation the sole maker of the laws; for, if the rich can thus *act for* the poor, why should not the Queen act for the rich? This matter is very completely explained by the practice in the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. There the general rule is, that *every free man*, with the exception of men stained with crime and men insane, has a right to have a voice in choosing those who make the laws. The number of representatives sent to the Congress is, in each state, proportioned to the number of *free people*. But as there are slaves in some

of the states, these states *have a certain portion of additional numbers on account of those slaves!* Thus the slaves are *represented by their owners*; and this is real, practical, open and undisguised *virtual representation!* No doubt that white men may be represented in the same way; for the colour of the skin is nothing: but let them be called slaves, then; let it not be pretended that they are *free men*; let not the word *liberty* be polluted by being applied to their state; let it be openly and honestly avowed, as in America, that they *are slaves*; and then will come the question whether men ought to exist in such a state, or whether they ought to do everything in their power to rescue themselves from it.

If the right to have a share in making the laws were merely a feather; if it were a fanciful thing; if it were only a speculative theory; if it were but an abstract principle: on any of these suppositions, it might be considered as of little importance. But it is none of these; it is a practical matter; the want of it not only is, but must of necessity be, felt by every man who lives under that want. If it were proposed to the shopkeepers in a town, that a rich man or two, living in the neighbourhood, should have power to send *whenever they pleased*, and take away as much as they pleased of the money of the shopkeepers, and apply it to what uses they pleased; what an outcry the shopkeepers would make! And yet, what would this be *more* than taxes imposed on those who have no voice in choosing the persons who impose them? Who lets another man put his hand into his purse when he pleases? Who that has the power to help himself, surrenders his goods or his money to the will of another? Has it not always been, and must it not always be, true, that, if your property be at the absolute disposal of others, your ruin is certain? And if this be, of necessity, the case amongst individuals and parts of the community, it must be the case with regard to the whole community.

Ay, and experience shows us that it always has been the case. The natural and inevitable consequences of a want of this right in the people have, in all countries, been *taxes* pressing the industrious and laborious to the earth; *severe laws* and *standing armies* to compel the people to submit to those taxes; wealth, luxury, and splendour, amongst those who make the laws and receive the taxes; poverty, misery, immortality, amongst those who bear the burdens; and, at last, commotion, revolt, revenge, and rivers of blood. Such have always been, and such must always be, the consequences of a want of this right of all men to share in the making of the laws, a right, as I have before shown, derived immediately from the law of nature, springing up out of the same source with civil society, and cherished in the heart of man by reason and by experience.

Such is the *foundation* of this right, and such are the general *consequences* of a want of the enjoyment of it; of all which consequences, *the last only excepted*, we have already amply tasted in this country. If this right had been enjoyed in England, should we have seen the families of the aristocracy fed from the pension and sinecure lists; that is to say, on the fruit of the people's labour? Should we have seen men *transported for seven years* for what is called *poaching*; that is to say, for taking; or attempting to take, wild animals, and thereby

disturb the sports of the rich? Should we have seen laws inflicting ruin, and, contingently, destruction of body, on the people, for turning barley into malt, or gathering hops from the hedges? Should we have seen old men, and even *women*, harnessed and made to draw carts and waggons like beasts of burden? Should we have seen a law to *hang a man* for striking another *without doing him any bodily harm*? Should we have seen Lords GUILDFORD and WALSINGHAM with *four church-livings each*, while those who do the duties of the parishes are little better off than labouring men? Should we have seen the Dean and Chapter of ELY taking away the great tithes of the parish of LEKENHEATH, a VICAR (who has *another living*) taking away the small tithes, while a curate with *ten children*, has *seventy-five pounds* a year allowed him, and no house to live in, and who digs, like a common labour, to raise potatoes as his almost only food? Should we have seen military and naval academies, for the purpose of educating the children of the rich, by means of taxes raised on the poor? Should we have seen the magistrates allow, for the maintenance of the hard-working man, not half so much as the subsistence of the lowest common soldier? Should we have seen any of these things? Should we ever have seen Pitt's and Sidmouth's and Castlereagh's dungeoning and gagging Bills? And would our miserable fellow-subjects in Ireland ever have seen laws to shut them up in their houses from sun-set to sun-rise on *pain of transportation*? Would they ever have seen any of the scores of horrid scenes, of which that of NEWTOWNBARRY was only one? And should we ever have been covered with the eternal disgrace of leaving them without an honest and efficient poor-law, while thousands upon thousands of them have died from starvation, after having eked out their existence by feeding on sea-weed and other such things, while the ports of their fine country were crowded with ships and steam-boats, carrying away its beef, pork, flour, butter, sheep, hogs, and poultry? Should we ever have heard of a *surplus population* and a *surplus produce* at the same time? Should we ever have heard of taxes, raised for the purpose of getting the *working people* out of the country, while the lands are half cultivated; and (for I must stop somewhere) should we ever have seen, at the same time, enormous taxes raised in order to give premiums to the idlers to increase their numbers? No: none of these things should we have ever seen; nor any of these corn-laws, combination-laws, or laws about truck, or about STURGES BOURNE; for neither of these things would have found a place in the mind of man.

Well, then, if such be the foundation and nature of *this right*; if the consequences of a want of its enjoyment be such; and if, with the exceptions above-stated, it is clearly a right belonging to *every man*, what injustice to attempt to withhold it from the working man! And what impudence, what insolence, to accord this right to a tax or tithe-eater, who is, only by taxes or tithes, enabled to live in a house of ten or twenty pounds a-year, while you withhold it from the man from whose labour come those taxes and those tithes! The bare thought of such insolence awakens indignation that sets utterance at defiance!

TO THE FARMERS AND TRADESMEN OF ENGLAND.

FARMERS AND TRADESMEN,

LORD STANHOPE lately said, in his place in the House of Peers, that there was rising up, in the country a general hatred of the poor towards the rich ; and he suggested the propriety of measures being adopted in time to correct this mighty evil. It was not rising up : it had risen up long before. It is indeed an evil far surpassing in magnitude any other that I can conceive : it has led to all the horrible scenes which we have been beholding during the last seven years ; and yet never do we hear from any persons in power, anything to make us hope that they mean to propose anything tending to put a stop to this evil, of which they do not appear to have the smallest idea of the real cause.

Totally ignorant of the causes of the evil, they look upon all the discontents of the working people as being unreasonable and unjust ; rejecting all the evidence of facts, they attribute the loud complaints and the violent acts of the working people entirely to their bad disposition ; to their laziness, their greediness, their dishonest propensities ; and, which is very curious, they, at one and the same time, ascribe their violent acts to want of education and to the reading of cheap publications.

Never looking at the true causes of the evil ; brutal enough to believe that the people would have their minds changed and be made as quiet as they were formerly, by being generally what stupid men call "educated ;" being brutal enough to believe this, at the same time that they are making reports which show that where one working man could read and write formerly, twenty can now ; being so stupid as this ; but finding that the education, as they call it, does not tend to produce that submission which they teach, they have recourse to the last remedy known to the minds of such men ; namely, to punishment in all its shapes, forms, and degrees of severity. Jails of a new sort ; dungeons of a new sort ; hanging in a new fashion and in new places, and in some cases on the tops of the new jails ; the treadmill, the hulks, and an endless variety of new modes of inflicting punishment. The progress has been very curious. As the taxes increased, the working people became poor and miserable. Exactly in proportion to the increase of taxes has been the increase of the poverty and the misery ; exactly in proportion to these has been the increase of larcenies and felonies. The old laws provided imprisonment and transportation for the larger part of these ; but a prison was a paradise compared to starvation and sleeping under a hedge ; and, though transportation took a man from his kindred and friends, it took him also to something to eat, and to drink, and to wear. To the prison, therefore, the dungeon and the treadmill were added, *as improvements of the age* ; and, instead of transportation, it became necessary in

numerous cases to inflict death. To check rioting and poaching, ELLENBOROUGH'S act, improved by LANSDOWN, made it death even to strike a man, without doing him any bodily harm, if the jury should determine that the striking was with intent to do him grievous bodily harm. It was upon this act that HENRY COOK, the ploughman of Micheldever, was hanged for striking BINGHAM BARING. Cook was one of a party of labourers who were going about demolishing thrashing-machines. BINGHAM BARING, with a party of his men, went up to the party to which Cook belonged and seized one of them by the collar, upon which Cook, with a little sledge-hammer, which he was carrying about for the purpose of demolishing machines, gave BARING a blow, which did him no bodily harm whatever, he, Baring, being out on horseback the next day. **FOR THIS COOK WAS HANGED BY THE NECK TILL HE WAS DEAD!!!** prosecuted by DENMAN and WILDE, and sentenced to death by VAUGHAN, the two other judges being PARK and ALDERSON, with whom were associated in this Special Commission, Denman, Wilde, Wellington, Pollen, and Sturges Bourne.

I could enumerate, if I had time, more than three hundred instances, in which the criminal code has been hardened during the time that Sir JEMMY MACKINTOSH has been receiving the praises of the hypocrites and fools for the softening which he has produced in it. At last, the very word liberty, as applied to the state of things in England, has become ridiculous. Peel's new trespass law has made it unsafe for any poor man to set his foot upon any spot of earth except the mere highway. Suppose an Englishman to be walking along the turnpike-road, and, pressed by feelings of nature and decency, to get over the gate of a field; slap comes the farmer, under Peel's new trespass law, seizes him by the throat, and drags him away as a malefactor. To shun the penalties of Peel, he is compelled to set decency at defiance; but, as nature will not be defied, he reluctantly yields to an exposure of the person; slap comes the informer with Chetwind's exposure act in his hand, and off he drags him to fine and imprisonment. Duly sensible of both these dangers, on he goes carrying with him the consequences of his salutary fears; and slap comes upon him the surveyor of the highways, who indicts him as a filthy nuisance; so that, of all the slaves that the earth was ever ashamed to bear, the free-born Englishman is become the most perfect.

Yet, to carry on the system of pension, sinecure, grant, retired allowance, debt, and dead-weight, such abrogation of the liberties of the people was absolutely necessary: it is impossible for a people to enjoy anything worthy of the name of civil liberty, and to be made to live upon potatoes at the same time: that is impossible: it is impossible to make English working people live upon potatoes without Peel's new felony laws, Peel's new trespass laws; without Ellenborough's and Lansdown's act, and without a standing army in time of peace, as great, or greater, than in time of war. But even these are not sufficient; for, in comparison with starvation, English people will set even hanging at defiance, besides which hanging the parties will not restore that which they have taken away. So that, at last, it becomes necessary to superintend their movements day and night.

Hence the half-military police, of which there are now thousands prowling about this hellish and all-devouring Wen. Hence the new and monstrous power of swearing in special constables, and thus enrolling, before-hand, the tradesmen in towns against the working people in the towns. Even this is now found not to be enough: and, therefore, there are projects for actually arming persons of property in the towns; actually furnishing them with arms by the government!

The whole of the history of this horrid plague lies in a very few words. By orders of magistrates; by evidence given before the House of Commons; by numerous documents of character the most authentic, it has been proved, that the labourers have, especially since the passing of Sturges Bourne's bills, been reduced to a state, and to a manner of living, beneath those of hounds and pointers; that they have been treated with the greatest possible harshness and insolence; that hired overseers have been set over them to make them draw carts and waggons, and otherwise to treat them like beasts of burden; that old men, little boys, and women, have been harnessed and worked in this way; that men have been put up at auction and sold for length of time to labour for the highest bidder; that husbands and wives have been forcibly separated, as the males and females of live stock are, in order to prevent the natural consequences of co-habitation; that young women applying for relief have been, by the hired overseer, by this salaried hireling and his myrmidons, laid upon the floor, held down by force, and have had the long hair cut from their heads with shears, as wool is cut from the body of the sheep; and that they have been compelled to submit to this, or to starve, or to become prostitutes.

You cannot deny, that such has been the barbarous treatment of the labourers and their families; and your landlords, while they have been moulding four farms into one for their own profit, have not only connived at all this, but have upheld you in it in their capacity of magistrates and parsons. The labourers know well, that it is unjust to treat them thus: common sense tells them that God never intended that those who raise all the food, who make to be all the clothing, all the fuel, and all the houses, should be fed worse than gentlemen's dogs, lodged far worse than those dogs, and treated worse than the least valuable of farmers horses!

Thus taught by common sense, by the word of God, and by the well known laws of the land, the labourers demand that they shall not be compelled to live upon potatoes, while you are living on the best of meat and bread, and have beer and wine always on your table, and are dressed in the best of clothing.

In this demand they are right: and that they may not abate one jot of it; that they may not relax in any one particular; that they may continue to use all and every means within their power, for the accomplishment of their object,—that object being a sufficiency of food, and clothing, and well being in the land of their birth, and *security* for their full and due enjoyment of the same, is the sincere prayer of

Their faithful friend,
WILLIAM COBBETT.

Joshua Hobson, Printer, 5, Market Street, Briggate, Leeds.

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LABOURERS' LIBRARY, Nos. 2 & 3.

"THE LAND"

THE ONLY

REMEDY FOR NATIONAL POVERTY
AND IMPENDING NATIONAL RUIN;
HOW TO GET IT; AND HOW TO USE IT.

BY FEARGUS O'CONNOR, ESQ.,
Barrister at Law, and Prisoner (for Libel) in York Castle.

ADDRESSED TO THE LANDLORDS OF IRELAND.

"A true labourer earns that he eats; gets that he wears; owes no man hate; envies no man's happiness; glad of other men's good; content under his own privations; and his chief pride is in the modest comforts of his condition."
SHAKSPERE.

THIRD EDITION.

LEEDS:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. HOBSON, MARKET STREET: SOLD BY
A. HEYWOOD, OLDHAM STREET, MANCHESTER; J. CLEAVE, SHOE
LANE, FLEET STREET, LONDON; AND BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1842.

[PRICE TWO PENCE.]

THE JOURNAL OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE

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TO THE LANDLORDS OF IRELAND.

“If England, with her proper power at home,
Cannot defend her own door from the dog,
Let us be worried! and our nation lose
The name of hardihood and policy.”

SHAKSPERE.

LANDLORDS!—Removed from the busy haunts of man; away from the bustle of the world; free from malice, hatred, or ill-will towards any living thing; and prompted by a sincere love to serve all without doing injustice to any, I assume the task of addressing you on a subject of immediate and paramount importance; and this I shall endeavour to do, without the introduction of political controversy. In truth, my Lords and Gentlemen, it is now full time that the madness of the many by which the destructive gain of the few has been upheld, should be laid aside for the benefit of all.

Landlords! removed, as you are, from the scene of action in which I have taken a conspicuous part, and for which I am thus compelled to address you from a felon's prison, mayhap your minds may require a little preparation, before *you* divest yourselves, as I have done, of all prejudice and unkindly feeling. With that view, I shall not go over any of the “whys” and the “wherefores” I am here; but, being very extensively acquainted with you, and very well known to many of your order, I have only to appeal to the whole of life for reasons why I should not be here, as far as you can judge. Let me, then, remind you, that during the whole of life I have never been party in suit or action; that I have never been charged with, suspected, or guilty of, one single mean, low, dishonourable, or ungentlemanlike act.

Having said thus much, with a view to free your minds from any prejudice which a conviction for what is called Libel might have created, allow me to tell you that, however the meshes of the law may have caught me, my real crime consists in an endeavour to preserve your Estates from the grasp of the English Manufacturers. That is “the head and front of my offending;” but do not mistake me: I claim no credit or thanks; inasmuch as my motives were of a far higher nature than a desire to uphold unjust power in your hands for a preservation of a very foolish and a very destructive monopoly. My motives were to give to you the opportunity of Reform, before others compelled you to Transfer.

Landlords! such is precisely your present position. You have now the option whether you will forego monopoly and commence Reform, or preserve monopoly and see your estates transferred to other hands.

Landlords! your monopoly consists in the law of primogeniture,

which, morally, socially, and physically, does you much damage ; in your mode of leasing your estates in large allotments unsuited to the capital of the country and destructive of the industry of the country ; in your conditions annexed to occupation ; in your restrictions as to application ; in your exactions as to political support ; in your encouragement of the substitution of horse-power for manual labour ; but, above all, in your obstinate perseverance in that antediluvian system of making serfs of your tenants, by short leases or no leases ; and the practice of exacting one settled invariable rent for a period, no matter how long or how short, without reference to the price of the produce of the commodity you let, instead of regulating rent by a graduating scale of prices of produce : this is little short of madness.

Landlords ! attend to the alternatives between which you have to select. You must either throw your estates into gravel, and become tenants in common with all the landlords of all the corn and cattle-producing countries of the earth, or you must bring your estates into the retail market, and give by their cultivation an impetus to home manufactures and native industry. Have you not had full and ample proof that the system of "hand-to-mouth" legislation, so long attempted, but in vain, is intended to correspond with the system which has been but too successfully practiced, of making the working classes live from hand-to-mouth, in order that they may be more at the mercy of those employers who eke millions out of their dependency, your obstinacy, and their own devilment ? Does not each day's novelty furnish you with proof that all laws are now made with the one single object, however wide they may be of the mark ; and that that object is to reduce the working people, made "surplus population" by machinery, to the necessity of working at wages regulated by the mere existence point, or of emigrating to some foreign land, or of dying of hunger, or of revolting against the unnatural state of things ?

Landlords ! you are called monopolists, robbers, plunderers, murderers, and starvers of the poor. If there is any defence for you, you will find it in recrimination. You will find it in the fact, that those who thus brand you have themselves committed wholesale murder, plunder, and spoliation upon the poor ; and would now rob you to further enrich themselves. But while I thus arm you with a defence against those more deeply steeped in crime, do not suppose that I hold you guiltless. No, I do not ; but then your crimes are as white as snow compared with the scarlet sins of your accusers ; yet you have committed many and flagrant offences, and are still chargeable with the name of monopolists, but not in the sense in which the steam-lords apply it to you. No ! while their object is not by any means to improve the condition or advance the comfort of the poor, your crime consists—not in upholding monopoly produced by Act of Parliament ; it does not consist of making a monopoly of grain ; but it does consist in making a monopoly of land which produces grain, in order that you may make a monopoly of legislation, which produces place and wealth, patronage and distinction. Now herein is your folly ! and my greatest surprise has ever been, that landlords, not of a political tinge, or not looking for political gain, will allow

their estates to be endangered by joining in the mad and reckless career of political partizans.

Landlords! let me warn you that, *at once*, either the Corn Laws must be Repealed, or you must render their immediate Repeal unnecessary, or put yourselves in a condition to meet the new order of things created by Repeal, or defend your estates by force of arms.

Again I tell you that the political democratic current will go on; but upon the opposers to that current must rest the damage which the flood shall do in its progress. I implore you to erect your breakwaters, by the removal of abuse; and then when justice triumphs you will be participators in the change. The people, the starving people, the brave people, the magnanimous people of England, have braved hunger, want, and privation with Roman fortitude and unprecedented heroism. They have rejected the bait intended to entrap them into absolute slavery! They have resisted all invitations to commit rapine, plunder, spoliation, and devastation!

But, Landlords, well organised as we are—(for I have left you, and become part and parcel of the people,)—and all hope failing of such *immediate social change* as we look for pending our advocacy of universal right, we shall be left, by your refusal, no alternative but to experimentalize upon your properties!

Landlords! we can rob you all in less than six weeks, though you have the Court, the Lords, and the Commons with you; and, having done so, then you would be thrown into revolution with the fundholder, the parson, the mortgagee, the simple contract creditor, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters, and your dependants, who, believe me, will be as loth to give up their grasp upon their monopoly as you have been to surrender yours. Judge, then, in which situation you can best arbitrate—whether before or after TRANSFER. We are called Destructives; while we have borne oppression rather than change the warfare to the oppressors' camp.

For the more complete elucidation of my views, and in illustration of the system now pursued and the one I shall propose, I will take a small estate of one thousand acres, and show the little benefit conferred upon society by your injudicious management and destructive monopoly of it; and the great benefit which a prudent and profitable disposition would confer upon yourselves and society at large. I shall prove, beyond the possibility of a refutation, that you are the monopolists, but not in the way sought to be proved by others. I shall prove that a wise and profitable allocation of a very small portion of the land of Great Britain and Ireland would make the whole National Debt a mere thing of nothing, capable of being redeemed in less than five years, by the working classes.

Landlords! in treating this question I will not allow a political economist or a moonshine theorist, a single peg to hang a scientific objection upon; because I will argue the thing according to the very roughest and most discouraging calculations, and not by the new arithmetic of scientific production. I will argue from such data as the least cultivated will understand; and, I will undertake to prove that the landlords, either as the ascendant political party, or as a united

body, have it in their power, and if they have the wisdom, will now prepare to save their estates, their country, their properties, and the people from want, from rapine, and from revolution. I am aware that many objections will be raised, but no refutation will be attempted; and as to objections without refutation they but bespeak prejudice and affection for custom which but ill-accords with the present times, and will not be listened to.

A thousand acres of land in Ireland, then, I suppose to be held in the most beneficial way; that is, direct from the proprietor, and upon lease. I should be justified in arguing upon the system from a thousand acres held by a middleman, whereof eight hundred was sublet, and two hundred held in his own hands, the labour of which was gratuitously performed by the tenants of the eight hundred acres. This course, however, I shall not take, as it is my intention to give you the best of the system, and to use the most unprofitable results of my system for my argument. I lay aside science and come to plain *digging* at once; and, therefore, take one thousand acres, divided into ten farms of one hundred acres each. Now then, let us see how this is cultivated; what it produces; how many it supports; and what surplus after cultivation and support, it leaves for expenditure in the manufacturing and trade market.

Let us then suppose the case of a farmer holding one hundred acres of ground. I will select the county of Cork,—Limerick being more of a grazing county, and Tipperary, Clare, and Waterford, being feeding and corn growing counties. Kerry very much resembles Cork; and some parts of it send forth their emigrants in harvest and potatoe-digging time, in the same manner as Connaught. Ten farmers, then, holding one thousand acres of land in the county of Cork, and living upon these farms for twenty-five years, (a time when the family becomes marriageable,) will not, unitedly, have spent £20 per annum in the manufacturing market. They live very little, if anything, better than their labourers, with whom they breakfast and dine six days in the week; breakfast being potatoes and thick milk, “blue,” from sixty to eighty-four hours old, sometimes boiled into curds and whey, and sometimes cold; and they have the same for dinner, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December. If the farmer can hold possession, and keep the stock together, and if in the twenty-five years he has scraped together £250 for his children’s portions, he considers himself right well off. We will suppose him to have three sons and two daughters. To the daughters he gives £100 each; the second son he marries to another farmer’s daughter, with whom he gets £100; the eldest son remains for some time unmarried, and when his parents meet with a suitable match for him in their old age, they, with the gossoon (the youngest son) give up the farm to the heir, (with “his Honour’s” consent, and *something more*,) and lives themselves upon a few acres of which the son pays the rent; and the £50 spared after the daughters’ portion remains for which ever shall be survivor, to live with the youngest, who seldom or never marries during the life of the old couple.

We now come to consider how these one hundred acres are culti-

vated. They are, for the most part, disposed of as follows:—potatoes, ten acres; wheat, ten acres; oats, ten acres; remainder in a transient state between weeds and their next turn for potatoes. Upon seventy acres, twenty wretched cows and four horses, or three horses and a colt, are supported; it is cultivated in the very rudest manner; I mean roughest—for spade culture is literally the rudest, but yet the most excellent, mode of cultivation. When I come to write a plain system for the poor man's industry, and show exactly wherein his inheritance lies, you will be astounded at the ignorance of your system, and your consequent loss. The potatoes are good, no better, the best in the world, because the flavour is not destroyed by sharp manures. The wheat, for the most part, is good as to produce, but miserable as to sample; the produce depending on the land, the sample upon the tenant, or rather upon the landlord, whose duty, whose especial duty, it is to see that above all other things, sound, clean, and suitable seed be sown; by suitable, I mean that upland seed from a distance be sown in swampy and stiff ground, and *vice versa*; by clean, I mean that a peck of weed-seed should not be sown with a bag of wheat seed, thereby exhausting the land, and producing an expenditure of much unproductive labour in weeding; not that labour is unproductively expended when crops require weeding—but it might be altogether saved, and more beneficially applied.

The cows produce scarcely a hundred weight of butter a head; they are made to calve unseasonably, for want of sufficient shelter; and thus much is lost by renewing the stock. A farmer tries to send his cow for service, so as to calve when the season will suit him; but the cow is obstinate and will only be in calf when she thinks proper. By this arrangement seventy acres, which would support thirty-five cows well, merely keeps twenty miserable things alive; the land, while in grass, being a mere *caput mortuum*, and may be considered as sacrificed to the thirty acres of badly cultivated crops, in a state of probation, waiting for its turn to be ploughed, having "seven years' skin upon it," which is necessary for producing good potatoes and wheat; the necessity being created by a want of the best manure that ever was, or ever will, or ever can, be applied to land, man's arms and foot with a spade at the end of them.

Our next consideration is the number of persons which the one hundred acres support. We will estimate the farmer's family at five; and he will have five labourers; but you know, as in Scotland, the practice is to get single men, or one man and his two sons, and a man and one son; however, I will give you all the advantage of five families, consisting of a man, his wife, and five children each; thus domiciliating six families, of seven to a family, or forty-two persons, upon the one hundred acres, living in rags, as I have described, like pigs, (but not like fat ones) from year's end to year's end, resting at night upon a sop of straw upon an earthen floor, without one single particle of furniture, or any one thing conducing to man's comfort—not one. Is that right treatment, my Lords and Gentlemen, for those who coin the barren surface of the soil into down beds, costly mansions, a well stocked larder, and a fine wardrobe?! Ah! beware

how you longer maintain political power at the expense of social disorganization, and a reversion of all nature's laws!!!

Let us now see what surplus, after such support, the farm leaves for traffic and supply, in the consuming and manufacturing markets. We will take a year's produce:—

	£.	s.	d.
Fifty bags of wheat at £1 5s. per bag	62	10	0
Sixteen cwts. of butter, seconds and thirds, at £3 5s. per cwt.	52	0	0
Twenty barrels of oats, spared from horses, at 10s. per barrel	10	0	0
Ten fat pigs at 2½ cwt. per pig, at £1 per cwt.	25	0	0
Spared potatoes	21	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£170	10	0

Rent, say 20s. per acre	100	0	0
Tithe and County Rate	10	0	0
Paid to five labourers, besides diet	20	0	0
Renewal of cattle for dairy	10	0	0
Wear and tear, smith's work, and additional men at harvest	20	0	0
Laid by for children	10	0	0
Spent in manufacturing market	0	10	0
	<hr/>		
	£170	10	0

Now what interest has the farmer for his capital employed as follows?—

Price of twenty cows, at £7 a-head	140	0	0
Four horses, at £10 each	40	0	0
Carts, tackling, ploughs, harrows, &c.	20	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£200	0	0

What interest has he for that which requires £10 a-year to keep it up, by the renewal of dairy stock to its original value? He has just the £10 a-year which he lays by if all goes well! And what is his remuneration? Just the amount of comfort that I have shewn him to be partaker of! And thus, for twenty-five years he and his family undertake great risk and responsibility, and at the end of that time are more than happy if remunerated with "his Honour's" bond for £250.

Come, can you deny my position; and will you say I do not considerably exaggerate my statement in favour of the farmer? If so, take stock of that class; and I pledge myself that for one farmer holding 100 acres who has saved £250 after twenty-five years' toil, that I will find four at least in arrears, with their cattle marked for rent, and without a fraction in the world! In fact a farmer with £250 is a "*rara avis*"—you call him "*a strong man*."

Landlords! believe me that you must take the whole system into calculation, before you can arrive at a just conclusion as to the probable result to be produced by passing events. You must look at all the

circumstances ; and from the whole, and not from any flattering or fancied portion of them, you must draw your conclusions. Let me assist you.

Take *Class Legislation* and GUNPOWDER for your dividend, and Political Economy for your deviser, and the result in your quotient will be a large surplus of fictitious money ; a large surplus of manufactured goods ; a large "surplus population," rendered useless by machinery ; a large surplus of non-consuming, unregulated, producing power ; a large army ; a large navy ; a large church establishment ; a large law establishment ; a large police establishment ; a large regal establishment ; a large poor law establishment ; a large oligarchical pauper establishment ; a small centralized gorged slave-owners establishment ; social ruin ; an empty exchequer : little trade ; discontent ; crime ; insecurity of property ; gaols full of "political offenders ;" starvation ; and revolution. As a superabundance of fictitious money presses hard upon and reduces the value of real capital, so does fictitious labour press hard upon and reduce the value of real labour. And as the bankrupt fails in the midst of surplus wealth, so does the operative starve in the midst of abundance, neither having the means of acquiring the drug. Thus you see merchants failing in the midst of affluence, and the people starving in the midst of plenty.

Landlords ! I next proceed to shew that the 1,000 acres subdivided into the too-large allotments of ten acres each, would maintain in affluence, two for one, compared with your present system ; would increase your rents ; and in twenty-five years, these 1,000 acres alone would cause an expenditure of more than £50,000 in the manufacturing market, after having furnished to society a much larger quantity above consumption than the same 1,000 acres now furnish altogether. I would make man to a certain extent his own producer, manufacturer, and consumer ; thus relieving the wholesale market of its slaves, and at the same time creating a vastly increased demand in the home market for those articles which the husbandman could not manufacture, and other articles which from the advantages of machinery he could purchase cheaper than he could make.

Landlords ! let us now consider what a hundred acres of ground subdivided into ten farms of ten acres each is capable of doing ; how many it would maintain ; the description of maintenance ; and the surplus, after having supplied the family, which it would leave for traffic in the manufacturing and commercial market. I shall, according to promise, take the rudest calculations ; and, firstly, as to the gross produce.

One-and-half acres of potatoes, half an acre of fallow, one acre of lay (sward) oats. two acres of wheat, half an acre of meadow, quarter of an acre of flax with clover, one rood of kitchen garden, one ditto of vetches, spring and summer ; and four acres of pasture. Produce for family's consumption for one year, (family consisting of a man, his wife, and five children) sixty stones of wheat ; fifty stones of oatmeal ; five hundred stones of potatoes ; twenty stones of bacon ; vegetables ; half the milk of a cow ; with poultry, eggs, and honey.

Let us now see what this will afford the family per week. More

than a stone of wheat flour ; a stone of oatmeal ; ten stones of potatoes ; for forty-five weeks, deducting seven weeks for Lent, (a time when Catholics abstain from meat,) two pound of bacon on Sundays, Mondays, and Tuesdays, every week in the year ; and three quarts of new milk per day, twenty-one quarts per week—thus estimating a cow's milk at twelve quarts a-day for the summer season, and allowing one quarter of her milk in summer and the other quarter to be used in butter during winter ; but I take all as milk. Value of produce, after the above amount for consumption shall have been deducted :—

	£.	s.	d.
Nine bags of wheat, at twenty stone the bag, at £1 5s. the bag	11	5	0
Produce of a cow and a half, valued at £8 per cow	12	0	0
Five barrels of oats, at fourteen stone the barrel, at 10s. the barrel, or less than 9d. per stone	2	10	0
Profit on four bacon pigs, fed from May to March, and bought at nine months old, £2 10s. each	10	0	0
Profit on four sheep, fattened after shearing, 10s. a-head	2	0	0
Eggs, poultry, linen (or spun flax)	5	0	0
Those amounts, added, make	£42	15	0
From which deduct :			
Rent and rates	11	0	0
Laid by for the girls' portion and casualties, per annum	7	15	0
Total	£24	0	0

which deducted from the £42 15s. leaves £24 to be annually expended in the manufacturing and commercial market.

Let us now take the aggregate of what ten farms, thus managed, can do as compared with the same ten farms in the occupation of one tenant.

By the subdivision, they can support in affluence comfort and abundance, seventy persons. They produce for sale, after consumption, ninety bags of wheat ; one hundred cwt. of bacon ; thirty cwt. of butter ; forty fat sheep ; fifty barrels of oats at fourteen stones to the barrel ; eggs, poultry, flax or linen, £50 worth.

Let us see what it does besides. It gives the family four fleeces at five pounds of wool per fleece—twenty pounds of wool ; and the produce of two roods of flax for winter employment and clothing.

Now take the one hundred acres held by one tenant and you have the following produce for sale, after the scanty existence of forty-two persons :—Wheat fifty bags, instead of ninety bags ; butter sixteen cwt., instead of thirty cwt. ; oats twenty barrels, instead of fifty barrels ; bacon twenty cwt., instead of one hundred cwt. ; flax, or linen, eggs, and poultry, nothing, instead of £50 worth ; sheep, none, instead of forty.

Cash saved and left for expenditure, after payment of rent, rates, and expences of one hundred acres, £10 10s., instead of £317 15s.

the bees in the midst of their own honey, not allowing them the very meanest subsistence after all: and you now vainly hope to limit suffering to those very producers, never reflecting that all other properties of every description and however guaranteed, whether they be fixed incomes, salaries, or fluctuating incomes, and whether insured by rents, Acts of Parliament, custom, or contract, must, sooner or later, catch the infection and take the disorder, which is—poverty.

In this state of things, allow me to claim, on behalf of my clients, the full benefit of the latest most brutally concocted decree, that decree which “threw the poor man upon his own resources.” Beyond that I do not go; and the fulfilment of that I have a right to demand. The rich have thrown the poor “upon their own resources.” I am satisfied; and you having made the law, I claim its spirit for my clients. Throw them, then, “upon their own resources:” those “resources” are labour, health, and industry; or speculation, fraud, and thievery. Which do you choose? If the latter, abrogate and destroy all impediments to a full exercise of those “resources,” by the repeal of all laws for the punishment of such offences. If the former, give to them the only means whereby in this world they can live upon their labour, their health, and their industry, which are their resources, by opening the gate of Nature’s field, and allowing them to enjoy these blessings for your and their own advantage, freed from more artificial constraint than is absolutely necessary for the existing state of society; and, above all, allow each to have a voice in regulating the existing state of things.

Landlords! I next proceed to comment upon a fallacy or two of good-hearted theorists, who would correct the whole of the evils of both systems by reclaiming our waste lands: and just observe how plainly I deal with this subject. I entirely agree as to the propriety, the prudence, and the necessity of bringing all waste lands into cultivation, every inch of them; it is the lean beast, and man’s labour alone can make it fat. But then, waste land is not the field wherein the labourer can acquire the full amount of his labour; it is not the market for establishing a just standard. Labour expended upon waste land, as to labour expended upon improved land, is just what the labour of a hand-loom weaver is as compared with artificial labour. In the one case the man is hired according to the market price set upon his labour by the capitalists; and in the other he works for himself; and his industry establishes the standard of his and of other labourers’ value.

Capitalists alone can reclaim land by hired labour, and that labour will be hired at as low a price as possible, if its value is not somehow established in a free and open market. The poor man, with only his health, his strength, and his industry, could not reclaim a cold swamp that required expensive draining; a mountainous heath that required fencing and heavy manuring; or scrub and stiff soil that required much labour and manure in the commencement. That is the field wherein the capitalist can insure a good interest for money laid out in reclaiming; but it is not one in which the poor man could find any market for his labour without a money capital; of which money

capital and the means of judiciously applying it, more hereafter ; for before I develope my scheme for the raising and applying the money-means, it will be well to first consider the justice, propriety, policy, reasonableness and mutual convenience of my proposition, as regards a *tenure in perpetuity* of land at a rent regulated by the graduating or sliding scale of prices of produce.

Firstly, then, as to a lease of land for a term of three lives, or thirty one years, or fourteen years, (which is the shortest term) ; or for any term at a fixed and unchangeable rent,—it is rank nonsense ! What would you think of a clothier, a hosier, or a wine merchant who should say to a purchaser : “ You must give me so much for this article, because two years ago I gave so much for it myself in the wholesale market ! ” and yet it would not be one-half as absurd as the practice of requiring a fixed annual price for your wholesale raw commodity, without any reference to the retail manufactured market. Besides the folly—the national loss is too enormous : and “ population presses too hardly ” *upon the means* **ALLOWED BY YOU** for its subsistence, to admit of the continuance of a vicious practice, which deprives the community of the full development of all that skill, industry, capital, and even honourable speculation, which the husbandman would more freely and largely expend upon his own account, than he can be expected to expend to his own disadvantage. You ride a hired horse harder and take less care of him than you do of your own horse ; so with the poor man who merely hires your ground at your will for a job.

Secondly, the very fact of you being compelled to make leases for ever of your land, would for self-interest, work out my principle of small farms ; inasmuch as you would then see the great advantage of a retail market.

Thirdly, the whimsical mode of letting land, operates prejudicially, not only against the farmer but also against the labourer, whose services the farmer will not venture to hire, except at the very lowest rate and the lowest amount ; while if he had a lease for ever he would make a garden of his every inch of ground. An Irishman will work from sunrise till sunset, and work cheerfully too ; and so would an Englishman, or Scotchman upon his own ground, and would require no military force to put him to bed at the sound of the dread curfew. He would sleep sound, and awake to the pleasing reflection that “ his chief happiness really consisted in the modest comforts of his condition ; ” his face you would never see in a court of justice, or resisting military authority.

I have shewn you that a conditional sale of your land upon the terms of annual render of payment is the only means of cultivating it to the highest state to which it is capable of being brought ; and now I proceed to shew you the egregious folly and injustice of requiring a stated rent through all time, while I show you, at the same time, the injustice of the present system to yourselves.

Land is to produce, what cotton is to calico, wool to cloth, tallow to candles, leather to shoes, wheat to bread ; that is, it is the raw material out of which the article is manufactured ; and, of course, as the value of produce and raw material in all other commodities reciprocally act

and re-act, now for and now against the speculators who buy and sell with the day ;—(pray keep that in mind, who buy and sell with the day ;)—the longer overholding than is necessary for a corresponding return between recent purchase of raw material and immediate sale of the manufactured article becomes matter of fair speculation for the manufacturer, and subsequently for the tradesmen who retails it. The one sells to convenience himself ; the other buys to convenience himself. It would not be judicious for a manufacturer to lay-by a fourteen years' stock of raw material ; and much less would it be to lay-by a thirty-one years' stock, without reference to, or control over, the price of the manufactured article : and yet the system of leasing land upon fixed rents for a term of years is precisely the same : not a particle of discernible difference.

Let us now see wherein authorities and titles, higher than yours, bear me out in my principle.

Firstly, then, I will take the ruling power of the Church, and I will show you how the principle of annual render, according to annual produce, is therein acknowledged ; and I will also show how you, when you altered the old practice, brought it still to bear upon the principle of reciprocity.

Tithes, then, are annual render of a tenth of all the produce of the land ; and before the enactment of the Tithe Composition Bill, which ordained a seven years' lease of them, the parson was partaker with the tenant in many casualties. If the tenant thought the valuation too high, or if the crops were destroyed, he could make the parson draw his every tenth sheaf, every tenth grass cock from the meadow, and the produce of every tenth rod, of every ridge or drill from the potatoe field. To obviate this inconvenience to the parson, and at the same time, to make a beginning by way of experiment upon an appropriation of tithes to your own uses, you gave the farmer a seven years' lease : and just think of the principle upon which you acted. You gave him for the seven years to come an income established by the average of prices for the seven years past ! Well, unjust as that was, it was, nevertheless, a full acknowledgment of my principle ; it took prices of produce as the standard of yearly income ; but it would have been more just and fair to have made the tenant pay money on account during six years of the current seven, and then to have balanced accounts by a whip upon the last year, than to have made the average of 1834 to 1840, both inclusive, a standard for the regulation of payments for the subsequent years of 1841 to 1847, inclusive. Indeed, taking the average price of each year is precisely the same, but too simple, as the average for any, or for every year within the year. However I am glad to be able to establish my title upon clerical principles, and therefore I adopt it ; but I must nevertheless explain to you the folly of taking a seven years' average, or any number of years as an average, instead of an average price within each year. Observe, then, that the average price each year constitutes, in the end, the average price of any number of years :—for instance ; take seven years' average prices at the following amounts :—14s. ; 17s. 6d. ; 21s. ; 24s. 6d. ; 28s. ; 31s. 6d. ; 35s. ; and you will find 24s. 6d. to be the average ; and you

will also find that the parson or person entitled to the seven years' different sums would have received precisely the same amount if he received the average price of each year within the year.

Thus far I have the principle acknowledged by Church usage and commercial usage ; and now I bring the practice of Government to bear ; and in all their contracts, from the regulation of duty upon grain, down to the supply of stores and provisions of all sorts, we find the principle of " buying and selling with the day " strictly acted upon by annual tenders and declarations, and contracted for, too, for the year.

Having said so much upon the subject of tenure and mode of annual assessment of value, I shall now show, and I think clearly, that a rent regulated by the price of grain, familiarly called " a corn rent," is the only just mode by which the annual value of rent can be ascertained without a risk of chances, all the bad ones being on the side of the tenants, and all the good ones on the side of the landlords.

If a manufacturer goes to market to purchase raw material, he is regulated in his bargains by the market price of produce ; so with the butcher who buys live stock ; so with the farmer who buys dairy cows and other stock ; so with those also who even purchase in the wholesale and sell in the retail market ; they, one and all, " buy and sell with the day ;" while the very man whose bargain should be in some way defined, in order the better to lead him to a calculation of surplus after rent, has no means whatever of judging even while the crop is reaping, of what portion becomes his share, or what portion becomes the landlord's share : and while in his share there is mixed up labour, capital, risk, responsibility, and personal security, the landlord's is altogether freed from any such harassing drawbacks.

Now, I ask, what can be more absurd than a stamped agreement to pay for each and every year, of thirty-one years, the same amount of rent, without reference to produce ? It is rank nonsense ! and ; upon the other hand, I ask what can be more just, seeing that the produce is of the land, and its render being annual, than that the standard of rent should be ascertained by value of annual produce ? One silly gentleman once said to me, when talking over the subject, that " a majority of farmers would prefer the principle which left the wildest field open for speculation, and that a corn rent would damp their energy, and in high years would act against them ;" upon the other hand I contended that the present system not only damped, but forbade all energy, beyond a mere existence point ; while the field of speculation would be incalculably increased by the substitution of a corn for a fixed-money render. I explained, that only with a corn rent could the benefit of leases in perpetuity be made equally advantageous to landlord and tenant, by giving to the landlord the only means which, apart from folly, he should enjoy of squaring his annual expenditure by his annual receipts.

I further aver, that in such cases high rents would be more beneficial to the tenant than to the landlord, inasmuch as upon all surplus produce the tenant would have a five-fold increase, while the landlord would have but a single increase. Thus : suppose ten acres of the

land of Blackacre, to be taken by A, at 20s. per acre, a corn rent when wheat was 20s. per bag; and suppose the price to rise to 30s., and the rent to be consequently increased to 30s.; in such case the landlord would have an increase of 10s. upon the acre, while A. would have an increase of 10s. on every bag, or £4 on every acre. It is true that the rule would only apply so extensively to grain-producing land; but inasmuch as the price of grain regulates the price of all other produce, it would affect all the grass land to the full amount of the difference of ten shillings; that is, the difference between twenty shillings and thirty shillings; while it would leave to the tenant the benefit of all surplusage of profit above rent upon grain; and what could be so great an inducement for the encouragement of the growth of grain, in which we are told, we stand in so much need?

Indeed if rents are calculated on a just principle, the *amount* of them is not so much an object as many persons imagine. On this head I unhesitatingly assert, as I before stated in a letter addressed to the Anti-Repeal Landlords of Ireland, in 1832, that rent, while labour is free, is but an item, and an inconsiderable one, in the labourer's account. I therein showed that land goes through several processes before yielding any crop; and that each and every one of these processes involves an expence greater in the amount than the rent; and the neglect of the proper performance of any of them, would make the lowest rent of the best land high, because the loss of all is involved in this single neglect. Indeed, by good fortune, I have by me a number of that very letter, and I shall here insert from it my observations on this head; they are as follows:—

“Let us see what rent really is. It is, in fact, one of the smallest items in the farmer's account. Let us contrast it with any one of the other items. The rent is 15s. an acre. Let us consider the expence of the different crops in their different stages. We will begin with Potatoes:—

	£.	s.	d.
“Seed of an acre of potatoes, four loads at 3d. a weigh	0	12	0
Cutting at 8d. a load	0	2	8
	0	14	8

“This is one item. How near the rent! Take the expence of another stage:—

“Expence of putting out manure, 120 loads to the acre, (very moderate,) six horses at twenty loads a-day, at the rate of 2s. 6d. a horse	0	15	0
Expence of cultivation, one plough	0	5	0
Eight men, hacking	0	5	6
	1	5	6

“This item, you see, is 10s. 6d. *more* than the rent. Let us take another:—

	£.	s.	d.
"Eight boys, at 6d. sticking.....	0	4	0
Sixteen men earthing and second earthing.....	0	10	8
	<hr/>		
	0	14	8

"Within fourpence of the rent! Let us try again:—

"Digging, thirty men at 8d.....	1	0	0
Picking, ten women at 3d.	0	2	6
	<hr/>		
	1	2	6

"This item is one-half more than the rent. And bear in mind that every one of the processes above enumerated and estimated are *necessary*, and that if any one of them be neglected the whole will be lost, rent and all.

"So much for Potatoes. Now for WHEAT, the farmer's great crop.

"Half a bag of seed wheat, at 25s....	0	12	6
One horse ploughing	0	2	6
	<hr/>		
	0	15	0

"Just the amount of rent. Try again.

"Expence of reaping, five men at 1s.....	0	5	0
Binding, 2½ at 1s.	0	2	6
Thrashing, five hundred, at 1s. per hundred.....	0	5	0
Cleaning, shaking straw, and taking to market...	0	2	6
	<hr/>		
	0	15	0

"The rent again! Indeed, the same result will come out, in whatever light we view the matter.

"We will now consider the *small* profits from an acre of land, putting aside, for the moment, the consideration of the larger profits. From these too, it will be seen that the rent, 15s. per acre, is but an item.

"The stalks alone of an acre of early potatoes are worth, for cattle, nearly a year's rent.

"The straw of an acre of wheat, at five hundred sheaves (six score to the hundred) to the acre, and at 5s. per hundred, will be worth one pound five shillings; ten shillings more than the rent.

"The straw of an acre of oats, say five hundred sheaves at three shillings and sixpence per hundred, will be worth seventeen shillings and sixpence; two shillings and sixpence more than the rent.

"Indeed the very weeds taken out of a potatoe field are worth a great part of the rent."

Landlords! I have been a very extensive farmer, and a very extensive employer. My skill in farming has been generally acknowledged; and I have no hesitation in saying that I would rather give five pounds ten shillings per acre for ten acres of land worth only five pounds, than give fifteen shillings per acre for land worth a pound; provided that the scale of the respective value of each was justly established by some correct standard. And why? Because, after payment of rent, I should have three times as much for my labour

upon the good ground ; and this again proves the value of labour over raw material. Give a good workman, without capital, ten acres of bad land at ten shillings per acre ; he will work away at it, and will not do much more than live, and pay his rent at first ; but he will certainly, if it is his own at a corn rent, by degrees improve it, and make it a savings' bank for his labour deposits. However, when I start at a ten shillings rent, I start from the very lowest at which man can work, pay his way, and live without capital.

Landlords ! I have now shown you, and I think plainly, that the reclaiming system, while it would certainly increase our producing powers and pay the capitalist a good per centage, would not, however, be the proper field for ascertaining the real value of a working farmer's labour ; and as that is my object, and in order that a difference as to means should not lead to a split upon the principle, let us see if by agreement upon proper details, we may not even yet agree upon this reclaiming system. In the consideration of this subject, I open a great national question well worthy the attention of statesmen who would yet reclaim their country, and make her what she ought to be.

The term "reclaiming," of course, applies to the practice of bringing barren and heretofore uncultivated soil into cultivation, and the process requires capital. The question is, how the double object can be achieved, of opening a free market for labour, and reclaiming waste land at the same time ; for I am not for reclaiming anything that will not reclaim my clients also. Waste land, if it is to be thus reclaimed, must be made a proper field for the exercise of free labour.

Landlords ! it is a sad and melancholy fact, that the philanthropist cannot discuss the simple question of digging or ploughing the ground, without finding himself hemmed in and hampered on all sides by the mysterious science of politics ; a science at a perfect knowledge of which no man can arrive, while the knowledge of to day may be ignorance to-morrow ; a science whimsically worked into practice by the most opposing principles—those of Whiggery to-day, and of Toryism to-morrow ; a science which makes the greatest statesmen and boldest tyrant in office quail before a single night's mildew, and break before "the wind that sheds the corn," while he refuses to bend to a simple system which would make man independent of all casualties save those with which God in wisdom thought proper to visit him ; a science which makes man's happiness, nay his very life and the peace of the country, and the very existence of society to depend upon the rule of farthings. Ah ! my Lords and Gentlemen, the wild hypothesis of the metaphysician, or the complicated and unravelable assertions of the theorist, provided they are wrapped up in class-legislation-dresses, pass current in the world of letters as wisdom and philosophy ; while the simplest assertion of the philanthropist, if it tend to the elevation of the poor man, is set down as infidelity and heresy ! However, as the rays of knowledge begin to shine through my prison bars, and as they are sure to spread their benign influence abroad over the whole face of the earth, I am nothing daunted ; and shall, therefore, despite the political economist, the farthing-sliding-scale patriot, and the dread-shower statesman, proceed at once to my purpose, which is to apply

details to your principle of reclaiming waste lands. Of that land you have in Great Britain and Ireland more than fifteen millions of acres capable of reclamation. It at all events can scarcely be called your own ; and is therefore out of the Newcastle principle of doing what you please with it. By its proper appropriation you not only do not suffer damage, but on the contrary, I propose to do for you what you cannot do for yourselves—to make it valuable. I estimate that land at a rent of one shilling and fourpence per acre. I calculate that each acre in the out-set, taking the tenant's house and stock and means of subsistence till the land is brought to bear into account, would require somewhere about seven pounds per acre, or a capital of about one hundred pounds for every fifteen acres. The fifteen million acres allotted in farms of fifteen acres to one million heads of families, would thus require a capital of one hundred millions of pounds sterling to aid the working communities in their work of reclamation.

The value of these fifteen millions of acres, at twenty year's purchase, at a rent of one shilling and fourpence per acre, would cost government £20,000,000.

Now what I propose is that government shall purchase the lands from you, say at that rate ; and then, under proper official management, at the head of which should be a Cabinet Minister, to be called the Minister of Agriculture, lease those lands at one shilling and fourpence per acre, in lots of fifteen acres, with a capital of one hundred pounds advanced to each tenant, subjecting the tenant to a rent of five pounds per annum for the land, and the interest of one hundred pounds at four per cent, that is one pound for land and four pounds for interest.

This sum of £120,000,000 I propose to consolidate into one national fund, which shall stand as a mortgage upon the fifteen millions of acres, and over which the Parliament alone shall have control ; and that it shall not be a transferable stock, or a stock allowed to be made the medium of exchange, barter, or traffic in the Jew's temple ; but that the government shall merely be agent for the fund-holder and fund-payer—receiving from the one and paying to the other.

I propose that after the first eleven years, the tenant shall yearly pay ten pounds in liquidation of his debt ; thereby liquidating the whole amount at the end of the next ten years, or with the twenty-first year of his tenancy ; at the close of which period,—twenty one years,—I propose that the tenant shall pay no more than the original chief-rent, of one shilling and fourpence per acre, and all local taxes ; or a pound per annum for his holding for ever and ever, and Amen—until some future generation in its wisdom, shall see the State necessity of making the then occupiers—(themselves being parties)—pay something more as their quota of any national requirement. Now, those who are in love with a national debt as a bond of union have it here in the flesh and the spirit ; those who so loudly call out for the cultivation of our waste lands have here the only chance by which their desire, which is improvement and the bettering of the poor man's condition, can be simultaneously effected ; those who “fear that population presses too hardly on the means of subsistence” have here the

means of obviating that disaster ; those of the school of political economy have here the practical illustration of one of their darling principles—that “ when circumstances close up one channel of speculation and industry, other circumstances open another channel ;” those who would gladly find a resting place for the “ surplus population,” made such by the substitution of artificial for natural labour, have here the harbour open for them ; those who would add to our now, as they say, “ too scanty surface of wheat producing land,” have here an extension offered to them ; while although I would much prefer the more improved field for the establishment of a free labour standard of value, I have no objection, provided *he gets the means*, to allow my client to work out his own salvation in the most barren field.

Here we have a means of immediately providing for seven millions of people ; and in less than ten years of providing for fifteen millions of people ; and at the expiration of twenty-one years, the original farms of fifteen acres each would be capable of being subdivided for the families, into farms of five acres each, if necessary. Thus would our present waste lands,—*New England, Ireland, and Scotland*,—of themselves, support on the spot twenty-one millions in affluence, comfort, and splendour, at the end of twenty-one years, and for ever !

The laws to effect this purpose need not occupy more than a folio sheet ; while the difference between three-and-a-half per cent. at which government could easily raise the money, and four per cent. cheerfully paid by the labourer, would more than cover all the expences of adding a new and necessary department to the State machinery. But it is too visionary ! 'tis complicated ! because the interest of the poor man is concerned ; while if two hundred millions of pounds were required for a speculation to build a floating bridge across the Atlantic, or to make a tunnel from Dover to Calais ; if the subjugation of labour or the importation of foreign troops, was the object, every angle in a fascinating drawing by some happy draftsman would be scanned, and all FOOLISH objections overruled by “ *Bagman*,” “ *Diogenes*,” “ *a Working Man*,” or “ *Agricolo* ;” in some “ *Leading Journal*” of the politico-economical school ; and the “ wind would be raised” in spite of all perils by land or water.

Landlords ! it is necessary that you should learn that the people have now had quite enough of the great cricket-match between Whigs and Tories. The Tories had a long innings, and left a heavy score before they were run out ; the Whigs in turn have been bowled out, and they have not made a bad innings ; but now, we must try a match of all Britain and Ireland against the oligarchy. And believe me, the Britons and Irish will catch the oligarchy out at every ball they strike. Will you never learn wisdom ? or do you not see that the time has come when a great nation must have some better Charter of its rights, some better security against starvation, some more defined policy for its government, than what fickle faction may whimsically eke out of the address of a defeated minister to his supporters, or out of the plausible speech of an expectant minister to his well-fed and welcome guests ?

Landlords ! we must have some assurance that a night's mildew or

a day's heavy rain shall not consign us to famine ; and we must have some better rule for regulating our supplies of food than the farthing or fractional sliding-scale of political economists. I can find no such rule except in a free labour market ; and therefore, for that I contend.

Landlords ! hitherto you have played your cards badly. You never should have relied upon other wealth than the highest cultivation of your natural resources and artificial advantages. Your iron, your coal, your insular position and green fields, added to your mechanical advantages over all other nations, and the hardihood and bravery of the people, should constitute your wealth, your greatness, and your pride. But in order to make slaves of the people, you have cheerfully joined in every experiment for the oppression, degradation, and humiliation, until at length you have made them declare in the wrath, that if injustice and this great disparity between man and man is to be perpetuated, it shall only be so by the right of conquest, and not by the sliding-scale of oligarchical whim.

Landlords ! no man has a more thorough contempt than I have for the mere professional patriot who lives upon abuse, while he looks upon dissension with the same interest that a lawyer looks upon a good complicated Chancery suit. I have now opened every door of the temple of corruption in which you have been long pent up, so that no obstacle should be opposed to your advance to meet popular opinion, so long appealing to you in vain. I have denuded the baggaboo Chartism of the party garb in which faction has long dressed it. I have shewn it to you in all its *Destructive* simplicity. I have explained the modest results anticipated from its success, and the great national advantages to be derived from its substitution for the present pauperizing, sterilizing, brutalizing, degrading, peace-destroying, hatred-creating system. I have shewn you that the people neither court idleness, nor contemplate plunder ; but that their principle is strictly Malthusian—amounting to a desire to be “thrown upon their own resources ;” and thereby to prove that “their chief pride consists in the modest comforts of their condition.”

I am, my Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient,

And very humble Servant,

FEARGUS O'CONNOR.

Condemned Cell, York Castle,

August, 1841.









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